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LAS VEGAS SUN a

Chemical will stay for years

Scientists, residents
discuss perchlorate

By Mary Manning

LAS VEGAS SUN

It will take years to stop a 40-year buildup of rocket-fuel chemicals from entering Las Vegas' drinking water, concerned citizens learned at a public hearing in Henderson Wednesday night.

Ammonium perchlorate, a rocket-fuel booster, has been found in underground channels flowing beneath Henderson toward the Las Vegas Wash, Brenda Pohlmann, lead scientist for the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, said.

"Where is it coming from?" asked Las Vegas resident Paul Da Rosa, the father of a newborn son, at the public meeting where scientists discussed ways to remove the rocket-fuel booster from water supplies in more than 40 states.

Pohlmann said perchlorate — made by two chemical companies near Henderson since the 1950s — has persisted in the soils and is carried by ground water to Lake Mead, Southern Nevada's major source of drinking water.

"The answer is to catch it, treat it and prevent it from going into the wash," Pohlmann said. "Cleaning it up will take years."

American Pacific Corp., parent firm of Pacific Engineering and Production Co., moved its manufacturing plant to Cedar City, Utah, after PEPCON exploded in 1988. Kerr-McGee Chemical Corp., still operating



ETHAN MILLER / LAS VEGAS SUN

BRENDA POHLMANN, of the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, listens to other state, federal and local scientists at a public hearing on perchlorate in drinking water.

in Henderson, plans to build a lined evaporation pond and then develop a way to remove perchlorate before it enters the water, Kerr-McGee plant manager Pat Corbett said.

Biological and chemical methods of ridding water of the chemical are under study, Corbett said.

Eight studies costing \$2.2 million are under way in rats and in humans to determine what level perchlorate may harm thyroid glands where it interacts with iodine. Some results should be available in September, she said.

For the Fort Yuma Indian Reservation near the end of the Colorado River in Arizona, potential harm to children is the major concern, Earl Hawes, environmental manager for the tribe, said. "I hope we are going to learn from the past," he said.

NIV

258 (on the revised attendee list)

12 (not able to attend; requested information/handouts)

14 (walk-in registration forms that haven't been entered yet)

284 = Grand Total